

CITY OF CORAL GABLES WATERWAY ADVISORY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020 - 5:30 P.M.

VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

- MEETING MINUTES -

MEMBERS	District	F 20	M 20	A 20	M 20	J 20	S 20	O 20	N 20	D 20	APPOINTED BY:
Lisette Stancioff	1	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Raul Valdes-Fauli
Carla Isaias	3	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Jorge L. Fors
Juan A. Galan Jr	3	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Patricia Keon
Manny Chamizo	2	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	A	Vince Lago
Mario Lamar	4	P	E	*	*	*	P	P	*	A	Michael Mena
Douglas Yoder	CR	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Peter Iglesias
Bertram Goldsmith	7	E	E	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Commission-As-A-Whole
John Swain	2	P	P	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	Commission-As-A-Whole
Andria Codina Miyares	6	P	E	*	*	*	P	A	*	A	Board-As-A-Whole

P – Present
E – Excused Absence
A – Absent
(-) – No Appointment

(*) – No Meeting

STAFF:

Jorge Acevedo, Utilities Division Director/Board Secretary
Pilar Wiese, Recording Secretary
Maj. Jennie Hoff, Specialized Enforcement Division

GUESTS:

Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Stephen Roper
Mary Jane Starr
Jackie Williams
Pat Massey

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. and a virtual (discussion only meeting) took place.

PRESENTATIONS / DISCUSSIONS:

- Assistant City Manager Ed Santamaria was present at the meeting to address concerns and update the board on the pedestrian underpass at the Cocoplum Circle.

Mr. Santamaria informed the board that he has been in contact with Miami-Dade County and they have agreed to the possibility of working with the City to plan a walkway underneath the bridge, even if constructed after the fact. Board members suggested to add a design for a safer pedestrian crosswalk as there is not a safe way to cross to the park and it has become a dangerous crossing. They also suggested building a bike path to connect Ingraham to the Old Cutler trail. Mr. Santamaria said he knows the county is looking into the design for a safer crosswalk, but he will need to see what they are planning for it.

Mr. Jorge Acevedo informed the board that the final schedule for bridge construction is summer of 2022. The county is working on the design right now and is expected to have 90% completion by January 2021. A community meeting will be scheduled by the end of January or February of next year. The procurement process will commence after this and is expected to take about 6 to 9 months. That is why they are scheduling construction by 2022.

Mr. Juan Galan said that board members are concerned about increased traffic around Granada and Hardee bridges. Mr. Santamaria said traffic detour during construction was discussed with the county. Truck traffic will be re-routed not to travel through Granada or Hardee bridges. FDOT has conducted a recent evaluation on the bridges and they are in very good shape. Unless there is heavy traffic, bridges should not be a problem. He said that Miami-Dade County owns the project, and they are managing and designing it.

Ms. Stancioff asked about disruption of boat traffic, especially in the summer when kids are out of school. Mr. Santamaria said he has spoken to the county about it and that the plan is to minimize impact to boat traffic. If there is any situation where the entire waterway must be closed off to marine traffic, then mariners alert will be given and during that time access will be restricted. They may have extended hours of construction and most likely work is not going to be done during the evenings.

Mr. Yoder said the board had a question about elevation of the bridge relative to sea level rise issues for clearance and asked if this is being considered in the design. Mr. Santamaria replied that the proposed clearance at mid-span is 16.5 feet. They were told that because of the geometry of the roadway and the existing

approaches that they would not try to maximize that but there was going to be a limit. He also added the county has a public information officer assigned to the project. One or two community meetings will be scheduled in the future, and notices will be distributed to residents on the waterways. He will talk to the county to make sure a police presence will be on the water during construction of the bridge.

- Discussion on “No trespassing” sign at Gables waterway access boat ramp launching area at Ponce de Leon and Rivera Dr. took place.

Mr. Acevedo announced some guests attending the meeting. Dr. Roper has sent a few emails because he wanted clarification recently regarding installation of “No trespassing” sign the county has installed to prevent use of the area. Mr. Santamaria reported that they are in contact with the county and that the county wants acknowledgement from the City that it will be okay for this launching point for non-motorized vessels. Mr. Santamaria said he is fine with that, but there are some complications mainly on the county side. This area is part of the Metrorail guideway and transit is not really set up for that kind of operation and they would have to get together with county parks department. Mr. Santamaria said this is a place where you can tell that one hand of the county was not really talking to the other, because the county put up these no parking signs to restrict access to this area, however county Parks uses the area all the time to do chores and events launched specifically from there for the public. Mr. Santamaria said what needs to happen to get this fully resolved is something that should be integrated into the Underline. He said we have brought this issue to the attention to the Underline and they have no issue integrating this thing into the other Underline project. Mr. Santamaria said if we as a City say we are okay with the use of non-motorized vessels; they will go ahead and look at how they could make that happen. There is a concern in the City administration and is a public safety one. He said people should not be allowed to park. Rather than “No trespassing” signs there should be “No parking” signs. The reason is that it becomes an attractive nuisance, a focal point for potential crime and public safety. He suggested that as a board they can advise the City Commission that they do not have an objection to this facility being used for non-motorized vessels subject to conditions such as no parking.

Dr. Steven Roper interjected saying that it was unrealistic to have no parking in the area as one cannot put down a canoe or kayak and then proceed to park a vehicle because there is no parking nearby. The nearest parking might be in about a mile away. Mr. Santamaria said it would be something to be discussed with our Chief of Police and Miami-Dade transit.

Ms. Mary Jane Starr joined the discussion saying that she has been launching her paddleboard in that location for years. She is 62 years old and cannot carry her paddle board down there. She must be able to park there to launch the paddleboard. There is adequate parking for 5-6 cars.

Dr. Roper intervened saying that he has been using the area for over two decades and has never seen any evidence of crime. What happened was that about three months ago, midway into the pandemic, many people started using it for motorized vehicles and they are driving large trucks and large carriages for their boats. Maybe that has set somebody off and it has made it impossible for all the rest who had been using this quite spot for decades to launch non-motorized craft. He is working with Commissioner Keon to restore parking for just non-motorized craft, no jet skis, no boat ramp, no boat trailers, etc.

Ms. Pat Massey joined the discussion. She has been using this waterway for many, many years and she would like to understand what precipitated this major change. Mr. Santamaria said that his understanding is that there were concerns raised by property owners along the waterway and we reached out to the county in connection to those concerns. When County Transit looked at that, they said that this should not be happening, even though it has been happening for decades and that is a no trespassing. Ms. Massey asked what the issues were. She asked if the issue is noise or other thing that has to do with enforcement of some sort. She lives on a waterway, but she cannot close the waterway because she is upset that someone makes too much noise past 11 o'clock at night. She would like to understand the complaints and the issues to approach them the right way.

Mr. Santamaria responded that the concerns he was aware of were littering and the nuisance parking in the area and that the area was becoming a mess and stuff was floating downstream, plus the nuisance of motorized vessels. When that was passed on to the county, the county is the one that made the call to restrict access. Mr. Juan Galan asked if it is possible that some parking could be designated like in Cocoplum Circle for people that are going to drop off their paddleboards and then go park over by the Rivera Station.

Dr. Roper intervened saying that if you are a paddler that will not work. You just cannot drop off a thousand-dollar craft and drive away to a particular area.

Mr. Santamaria said he does not disagree with them and that the city did not decide to eliminate the access since the city does not control the land. This is a county land. The City will do all it can, but at the end of the day, it is a county's decision.

Mr. Galan said that it should be a way to accommodate users and City's requirements in some way to be helpful to everybody such as being able to put some permanent bollard or steel tubes that you can tie, and you can lock your canoe to when you come back from parking your car.

Mr. John Swain liked the idea of the bollards. He understands the problem came up when people started putting motorized crafts in and parking was an issue because they got trailers and everything else. If you put bollards in, people with trailer will not be able to use it anymore. He suggested adding signage for non-motorized vehicle.

Board members and guests agreed that this could be turned into a good news story by working with the Underline to develop a non-motorized vessel launch spot.

Discussion was held regarding the parking issue. Mr. Santamaria suggested when there is a quorum on the Board to make a recommendation to the City Commission to push for the county to allow parking in this area. Mr. Yoder said that he thinks the county will accommodate the city's recommendation if indeed the area can be sealed off from motorized vessels by using the bollards as it seems parking became an issue because motorized vessels were put into the water there.

Ms. Stancioff wanted to assure residents that the board has made a lot of changes and put a lot of effort to find ways to get people on the water, that otherwise do not live on the waterways. As residents on the waterway, we take great joy and great pride in seeing everybody in the waterways. There have been a lot of changes that have been made and a lot have been proposed to the Commissioners. No action can be taken at this meeting because there is no in-person quorum, but we will do everything we can once we are able to meet to resolve this issue.

- Mr. Juan Galan would like to discuss how safety on the waterways could be improved at next meeting. He would like to ask the police department what the responsibilities for safety and enforcement of rules for paddleboarders and boat riders are. He said that a recent death could have totally avoided if the person had been wearing a life vest.
- Major Jenny Hoff introduced herself to the board. She has replaced Major Lawrence in the Specialized Enforcement division, which Marine Patrol is a part of. She was in Marine Patrol for five years as an officer, so she has experience in the waterways and enforcement. She heard the concerns and will be assisting on addressing them. She said that police do enforcement, especially for life

preservers. There is nothing stating they must be wearing now and that is where problem lies.

Mr. Galan intervened saying that the rule is that a paddle board is a boat on their power because it uses an arm because of that they have two choices. They can either take a regular orange life vest and carried on their paddle board or the easier thing to do is to put away, to wear a couple of suspender life belts that are much lighter and not as bothersome.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:00PM

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.