

City of Coral Gables



Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 11, 2026

9:00 AM

Sister Cities Conference Room - Coral Gables Museum

Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board

*Chairperson Genevieve Orr
Board Member Mary Beth Burke
Board Member Carmen Cason
Board Member Bonnie Crouch Seipp
Board Member Alexis Ehrenhaft
Board Member Maria C. O'Naghten
Board Member Susan Rodriguez*

The Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board will be holding its Regular Meeting on Monday, May 11, 2026, commencing at 9:30 am EST.

Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83315833193>.

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.

Meeting ID: 833 1583 3193

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Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/koHpBvqy7> 305-461-6769 (Coral Gables local number)

To speak to the Merrick House Governing Board 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.

The public may also comment on an item on the agenda using the City’s already-established e-comment function which may be found on the City’s website at: (www.coralgables.com/commissionmeetings) once the meeting’s agenda is published or by sending an email to cityclerk@coralgables.com prior to the start of the meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Orr read a poem written for the Merrick House Board by a woman from O'Miami who she met at the Coral Gables Library and lives in Coral Gables.

I walked the streets, he saw in a dream.
I find solace
in a seat warmed by the sun and time,
along the ledge of a fountain so precious
it must have been carved
with sharp imagination --
the mind's most useful tool.
I wonder who is,
I wonder who was
this man,
this maker of worlds,
this master of stone in space.
When he closed his eyes
and saw a city beautiful,
gardened by shell,
Coral,
and light,
did he know it...
it would become a treasure, too?
Did he know we projected like a dream?
Like, we protect it like we dreamt it?
quite honestly dreamt of it.
I don't know him. all that well,
but I bet he was a poet.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice
Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

III.-1. [26-1420](#) Merrick House Meeting Minutes for March 9, 2026

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Burke, seconded by Board member Seipp, to approve the minutes for the Merrick House Governing Board meeting on March 9, 2026. This motion passed by the following vote:

Yeas: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice
Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

III.-2. [26-1538](#) Merrick House Meeting Minutes for April 13, 2026

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Burke, seconded by Board member Seipp, to approve the minutes for the Merrick House Governing Board meeting on April 13, 2026. This motion passed by the following vote:

Yeas: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

IV. NEW / OLD BUSINESS

IV.-1. [26-1421](#) Merrick House Activity Report - March 2026

IV.-2. [26-1564](#) Merrick House Activity Report - April 2026

3. **Pumpkin Palooza - The board discussed the proposal for this event brought forward by Lauren Kraus, resident of 1232 Coral Way.**

Event aims to introduce new neighborhood families to the House through a family friendly fall celebration. Ms. Kraus would handle vendors, activities, and logistics. Minimum burden on Board members. Activities would be free with attendees only paying for food.

Activities: Pumpkin-themed / fall-themed attractions, children's activities (e.g., sensory bins, arts and crafts, face painting), live children's music, food vendors/trucks.

Board members and staff will work together to finalize the date, and operational details.

Event time: 1:00pm - 4:00pm

A motion was made by Board member Seipp, seconded by Board member O'Naughten, to approve the application for the Pumpkin Palooza event in early October 2026 with details to be worked out with Staff. This motion passed by the following vote:

Yeas: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

4. **Coral Market** - Carolina Castro appeared on Zoom and proposed expanding Coral Market from a biannual vintage market to four events per year, citing strong community demand and the market's success in connecting residents with the Merrick House while supporting local vintage and home ware vendors.

Ms. Castro advocated for continuing to keep the house open during market days and encouraging donations. She noted that more than 800 visitors toured the house during the previous market, suggesting that even modest donations could create a meaningful revenue stream for the house.

Tentative Dates: September 26, November 14, January 9, March 13

A motion was made by Board member Seip, seconded by Board member Rodriguez, to approve the Coral Vintage Market dates of September 26, November 14, January 9 and March 13. This motion passed by the following vote:

Yeas: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

5. **Credit Cards** - The Merrick House is now able to accept credit cards as a form of payment.
6. **Kitchen** - Board member Burke would like to clean the kitchen. Staff will get back to Ms. Burke on what to do with the contents.
7. **Donation Jar** - Board member Rodriguez suggests the House always have a donation jar out with a sign advising tourists they can make an extra donation.
8. **Mold Report** - Chairperson Orr suggests a company to obtain a mold report.
9. **Handicap Ramp** - Chairperson Orr mentions the stairs becomes slippery when leaves fall.
10. **Outside Porch Ceiling** - Has mildew.
11. **Bunting** - Chairperson Orr asks staff if Public Works can put up the bunting for the July 4th holiday.
12. **Coral Gables Museum** - Chairperson Orr discussed the House loaned several items to the Museum for display for an exhibit. Ms. Orr wants the items back before they are forgotten. Some of the items are part of the tour.

Staff confirms all items loaned to the Museum have been returned.

13. Wood Trim - Chairperson Orr requested the wood trim of the House be completed before the Christmas open house.

The work involves conservation and refinishing of historic wood throughout the house so that all surfaces match. This includes shellacking the wood rather than simply painting it. A previous estimate for the wood trim work, obtained about six years ago, was approximately \$200,000.

Ms. Kautz agreed to obtain quotes and develop the necessary planning documentation.

14. Petals & Pastimes Event - Chairperson Orr thanked everyone who volunteered for this event. O'Miami was unable to attend and provided postcards. The professional Croquet player also did not attend.

15. Docents - The House is down to 6 docents. Docent Coordinator Gay Bondurant, will be recruiting for more docents.

V. CITY COMMISSION ITEMS

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

VII. ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY

1.

A motion was made by Board member Seipp, seconded by Board member O'Naughten, to approve not having a Merrick House Board meeting for June and July. This motion passed by the following vote:

Yeas: 6 - Board Member Cason, Board Member Crouch Seipp, Chairperson Orr, Vice Chairperson Burke, Board Member Onaghten and Board Member Rodriguez

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ehrenhaft

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

NOTE