

City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134
www.coralgables.com



Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 19, 2023

8:30 AM

Draft Minutes

Police and Fire Headquarters, Community Meeting Room

School Community Relations Committee

Chairperson Dr. Winnie Chang
Vice Chairperson Sandy Dimitris
Board Member Erin Anding
Board Member Sam Joseph
Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya
Board Member Andrew Nadal
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 19, 2023, 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.

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CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:34 a.m.

ROLL/QUORUM CALL

Present: 8 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Anding, Board Member Ward Sando and Nadal

Absent: 1 - Manrara Cartaya

A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of April 21, 2023.

Attachments: [Cover Memo](#)
[Draft Minutes- SCRC April 21 Meeting](#)

This Minutes was approved

Yeas: 5 - Slesnick, Dimitris, Chang, Anding and Nadal

Absent: 4 - Watson, Joseph, Manrara Cartaya and Board Member Ward Sando

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public wished to comment.

C. NEW BUSINESS

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

Chief of Staff Ms. Hernandez presented the School Chair's proffered items:

- Revised H-6: Recognition of the Florida Seal of Biliteracy Program in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)

Chairperson Chang agrees that the Biliteracy is a wonderful positive recognition program especially to those living in South Florida. It would be highly beneficial to have small children exposed to foreign languages early in their lives even as early as third grade. Board Member Joseph agreed that the program discussed is a good idea and mentioned the consulates participation in the Literacy Festival and a possible pilot immersion Portuguese pilot program. The Portuguese Consulate will attend the festival and, in the future, will present their ideas to the SCRC to see how this program can be implemented within the city.

- Revised H-5: School Board Endorsement Commemorating the 121st Anniversary of the Independence of Cuba - May 20, 2023

C-2 Update on the Special Needs Initiative Planning Group (SNIPG) (Facilitated by Jennifer Ward Sando, Board Member)

To date three meetings of the SNIPG were held since Board Member Ward Sando took over the initiative. There was good participation from various groups. It was noted that the term "Special Needs" is no longer used. Instead, a term generally accepted is "Individual with Disabilities."

Taking this preference into consideration, Board Member Ward Sando motions to change the name of the Special Needs Initiative Planning Group to People with Disabilities Planning Group. Board Member Joseph seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Ward Sando notes that she might be transitioning to the Disability Affairs Advisory Board at the end of her current term.

Board Member Joseph requested a list from Board Member Ward Sando of the various equipment and general items needed for the children and in turn he will share with parents during the Literacy Festival. Most believe many of the equipment used by the kids is provided by the school district.

C-3 Discussion regarding supplemental funding for area schools from the City of Coral Gables to address deepening budgetary pressures on public schools (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)

Estelle Lockhart presents on behalf of Joshua Goodman who was out of town.

- The working group of PTSA/PTAs have looked into what the cities of Miami Beach and Pinecrest provide. They have met with the Mayor and others to ask what can be done and are told the city sends millions to the district through taxes each year.
- The PTSA's are looking for the city to provide additional funding for various school programs. They are starting a working group to have a plan in place and request the monies during the current budget process.
- Brought up the idea of charging developers and new businesses some percentage when they come into the city for school funding.
- Board Member Slesnick recommended that those members of the School Community Relations Committee that are appointed by the Commission report to them more often to keep them updated on what is going on. She further commented to perhaps use the \$20K from History Tour for the schools instead and consider simpler and less costly tours, for example, the existing walking tours that are available to the public.
- Mrs. Lockhart wants to set up a working group meeting to include the Chamber and Foundation and wants the Schools Community Relations Committee to make the request.
- Board Member Joseph recommends that this be an item at a future School Community Relations Committee meeting agenda to assist with scheduling.
- After discussing a possible workshop, it is decided that more information is needed, and this will be revisited during the June SCRC meeting.
- Board Member Joseph motions for Chairperson Chang to draft a letter asking the principals for their annual needs which will assist in future discussions of this item. Board Member Slesnick seconded; the motion passed.

C-4 Leaving a Legacy: SCRC Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)

Board Member Joseph provided a brief synopsis of his history with the School Community Relations Committee and further mentioned that prior to 2015 he did not know that there was an Education Committee in the city. He's interested in seeing the percentage of Coral Gables residents that attend private versus public schools. During 2015, 67% of children attended private schools. Board Member Joseph reflected on how currently the SCRC has been able to advise the city to fund two projects. The Coral Gables History Tours and the Literacy Festival.

This committee is active and proactive in working hard for the children. This is a board highly interested in the benefit of the city.

A Certificate of Appreciation from the Mayor was presented to Board Member Joseph by Chairperson Chang for his hard work, service to the students and to the community.

D. OLD BUSINESS

D-1 Discussion on the Coral Gables History Tour (Facilitated by Winnie Chang, Chairperson)

Resolution No. 2019-76 was reviewed and discussed.

- Board Member Slesnick wrote a script while working in the Museum and left it in their hands.
- Students would be picked up at school and the tours would start at the Museum with a 20-minute tour of the interior and exterior of building.
- Multiple museum educators were scheduled due to the class sizes.
- The tours consisted of the Museum, City Hall, Merrick House, and Biltmore Hotel. The Biltmore would open on of their meeting rooms for the students to eat their bagged lunches.
- Field trips usually ran from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., this excluded transportation time from and to school.
- Board Member Joseph mentioned that the Coral Gables Foundation had offered to help fund the feeder schools to participate.
- Ian from the Museum staff was present during the meeting taking notes and will be reporting back to the Museum.
- The education department of museum currently only has 2 staff members.

Attachments: [Reso No. 2019-76 - History Tours](#)

E. ONGOING BUSINESS

E-1 Update on the Coral Gables Family Literacy Festival (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)

- Over 45 vendors, built to capacity.
- Brazilian Consulate will be participating this year and adding Portuguese language literature and vendors.
- Possible soft opening of the library will take place. Opening Ceremony is projected to begin at 11:00 am on May 22.
- Little Carver Italian program performing at the Teacher of the Year event.
- There will be a Teacher Recognition item on the May 23 Commission Meeting agenda sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez.
- Chairperson Chang mentioned that next year the School Community Relations Committee should have a table at the Literacy event.

E-2 Update on Teacher Awards Project (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)

- Board Member Joseph met with Mayor Lago, Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Fernandez.
- They are in support of funding and are eager to approve the project.
- There is a discussion about a possible Pilot program for next year holding the awards at the Coral Gables Country Club.
- Discussions on PTSAs donating the awards.
- Board Member Joseph motioned to have the original pilot program report and other supporting documents sent to the City Commission. Vice Chairperson Dimitris seconded, motion passed.

Attachments: [Teachers Awards Report 2019.docx](#)

E-3 Notice Pursuant to Resolution No. 2020-245 (Facilitated by Solanch Lopez, Acting Liaison)

Liaison Lopez will send Staff Report once available to School Community Relations Committee members for their information. Project is called "The Avenue". Project's location will be at 351 San Lorenzo Avenue; and it's slated to be a mix use structure serving as a hotel, residence and first floor retail. The request involves conditional use approval for remote parking and is expected to be presented to the Planning and Zoning Board on June 6.

E-4 General Update (Facilitated by Solanch Lopez, Acting Liaison)

No general updates provided.

F. ANNOUNCEMENTS

F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, June 23, 2023 | 8:30 a.m.

Comments/Questions: scrc@coralgables.com

Board Member Joseph motioned to move the June meeting from June 23 to June 30, Board Member Ward Sando seconded. The motion passed.

- F-2 Join a local PTA or subscribe to their newsletters using the following links:
- F-3 Gables Family Literacy Festival - Saturday, May 20, 2023 | 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- F-4 Town Hall Meeting with Mayor Vince Lago - Thursday, May 25, 2023 | 6 to 8 p.m.
- F-5 School Board Chair Rojas' Office Hours - Thursday, June 1, 2023 | 12:30 to 3 p.m.
- F-6 Gables Gallery Night - Friday, June 2, 2023 | 6 to 10 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

NOTE

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