



CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes of April 11, 2022, 8:30 a.m.
Coral Gables City Hall, City Commission Chamber
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Historical Resources &
 Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET
 CORAL GABLES
 FLORIDA 33134

☎ 305-460-5093
 ✉ hist@coralgables.com

MEMBERS	A 21	M 21	J 21	J 21	A 21	S 21	O 21	N 21	D 22	J 22	F 22	M 22	A 11	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	P	-	P	P	E	E	P	P	N O M E E T I N G	P	P	P	=	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	P	-	P	P	E	E	P	E		P	P	P	P	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	P	-	P	E	P	E	P	P		P	E	P	P	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	P	-	A	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Mary Beth Burke	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		P	P	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	-	P	P	P	P	E	P		P	E	P	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	P	-	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member.
 - = No Meeting; # = Late meeting arrival

STAFF: Warren Adams, Historic Preservation Officer, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Colette Worm, Docent Coordinator.

RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Nancy Kay Lyons, Administrative Assistant

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:42 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ms. Seipp and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the minutes of March 14, 2022, with corrections.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Lam joined the meeting.

OPENING STATEMENT

Chair Meagher read about Charles, the middle Merrick brother between his visionary older brother George and his youngest brother, renowned artist Richard. Charles as can be typical of a middle child never made the public splash that George and Richard did, but he was far from unaccomplished. He contributed more to the Merrick organization than is generally realized and when George's position in Coral Gables crashed in 1926 Charles quietly regrouped and remained a respected member of the Miami community for another four decades. He loved working with native rock, and as a young man even assisted with the construction of the facade of Plymouth Congregational Church. It was the beginning of a career that would lead him to becoming a master stone mason. Upon graduation from Tennessee Military Institute and Valparaiso University in Indiana Charles returned to Miami to work with George building the rock facades of the Granada and Douglas Entrances, the imposing semicircle of rock columns on City Hall as well as some structures at the new University of Miami. It was Doc Dammers who told him to stop wasting his time with rock and start selling real estate, advice he took. While Charles had made over \$100,000 selling real estate for his brother by 1928, he found himself broke. As he says "we were all broke, and I was back with the tribe while working for Dr. Fairchild's place in Coconut Grove. By 1930, unemployed, Charles was living at Merrick House with his mother. When George opened the ill fated Matecumbe Lodge in 1931, Charles ran boating charters out of the resort, continuing to do so for a few more years, even after the lodge burned to the ground in spring 1931, shortly after opening. Of course, they did rebuild the lodge, albeit on a smaller scale. As the depression ended, Charles, who had served as assistant postmaster of South Miami returned to California where he had worked briefly in his younger years. His primary job being laying brick. He returned to Miami in the latter 1940's and married Myrtle May Wilson in 1947, they would remain married until his death. One of the few Merricks who only married once. The following year he laid the stones for the handsome curve of the stone bridge at the

University of Miami, considered a marvel by fellow masons. He also did all the stonework for the new Burdines building to great acclaim. When asked about his career, the unassuming man who looked remarkably like his grandfather said simply. "Oh, I have had a fine life" (excerpts from Coral Gables Museum article by John Allen).

Chair Meagher introduced guest Christina Izquierdo who had attended the garden tea. Ms. Izquierdo mentioned that she attended the Garden Tea with her daughter. They both enjoyed the event and wanted to help. She said she was saddened by the development in Coral Gables and would be willing to help plan events at the Merrick House. She stated that Ms. Burke had her information and she hoped that she would reach out to her. Chair Meagher said they would consider asking her to be a docent.

DOCENT COORDINATOR REPORT:

Ms. Worm reported that 104 guests entered the house at the tea. She thanked everyone for her farewell dinner. Ms. Worm provided updates on: skateboarders; stains on the garage; leaks; air conditioners; fire extinguishers; bollards; paint on the railings; plants donated by Garden Club; the coral rock wall; and flags. Chair Meagher said she would follow up about the flag. Ms. Lam said Commissioner Anderson had personally donated the flag and she should be thanked. Ms. Worm noted that the flag was cotton instead of polyester and John Brown was the contact person in Public Works for the flag.

Ms. Worm noted that today was her last day. She said more book labels are needed and requested that they be round instead of square. She had sent Ms. Cason information about becoming a docent. She had located a Google page for the Merrick House and sent information to update the page. The Miami Visitors and Convention Center also updated their webpage with the correct information on the House.

Ms. Worm reported the following statistics for March: 60 Visitors and \$332 collected. Sunday and 2pm were the most popular day and time.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Mold:** Ms. Ehrenhaft said she noticed the poetry books had mold. Ms. Worm stated that there is mold remover.
2. **Internet Listings:** Ms. Seipp said information on different sites was inconsistent about the times the house was open. Ms. Worm said she had written to have them update the information.

The entire board expressed their sentiments to Ms. Worm, wished her luck and said they would miss her.

3. **Coral Rock Wall:** Mr. Reese asked about the wall. Ms. Kautz said that materials would be staged by the ramp, and they would start dropping off materials this morning. The board members thought they should be there when the work began. Ms. Kautz said the start date would depend on when the permit was issued. Chair Meagher suggested inviting the Historical Preservation Association of Coral Gables to have their June 3rd celebration of George Merrick on the lawn at the Merrick House and have a ceremony for the wall. Ms. Kautz suggested instead that the Board host an unveiling event to celebrate the construction and thank the officials for funding it. This should happen prior to any other event. They would have to work with the mayor and commissioners to see when they were available to determine a time for a ribbon cutting.
4. **New Docent Coordinator:** Nothing to report officially.
5. **Letter to the Villagers:** Ms. Kautz wrote a letter to the Villagers thanking them for the grant.
6. **Garage Organization:** Ms. Kautz responded to Chair Meagher's question about their offer to help clean out the garage. Public Works assistance was needed and she would reach out the board if their help was required.
7. **Tea Event:**

Chair Meagher is working with the Community Foundation regarding the check. EventBrite income was approximately \$4317.75. Income was reported as: \$1,030 from ticket sales, \$250 from vendors, \$177 from merchandise table, \$182 from Merchandise table at the Villagers Garden Tour (the Villagers did not charge a vendor fee). The catering expense was approximately \$5056. Chair Meagher thanked everyone for their contributions.

 - a) **Food:** 115 people attended and there were 140 boxes of food which was not enough as some people took more than one box. It was suggested that guests exchange their wristband or ticket for food.
 - b) **Entrance Point:** At future events there needed to be a central entry point/registration table or more than one.
 - c) **Ribbons:** People loved the different colored ribbons and reflected the theme of the event.

- d) **Docents:** Ms. Reese said that there were not enough docents at the event. Ms. Burke said they currently had 7 docents and two were just starting.
- e) **Antique Sewing Machine:** Nancy Martini had fun doing the demonstration, and guests were very interested, she also had other ideas for other events.
- f) **Yearly Events:** Ms. Seipp suggested a yearly tea. The board agreed.
- g) **Delegation:** Ms. Cason suggested having a meeting the week before and delegating different responsibilities. Chair Meagher suggested having a chair for each event.
- h) **Items on Display:** Quilts, write-ups, nightgowns, and wedding dresses are still on display.
- i) **Conservation and Restoration:** Ms. Kautz said she had received numerous questions regarding conservation, restoration, and cleaning of textiles and suggested having someone do a talk on this topic. Ms. Burke said they had a flyer from a textile conservatory in Cincinnati.
- j) **Pictures:** A photographer came by unannounced and provided photos to Chair Meagher for use. Ms. Slesnick took photos as well and they would be in Jeannett's Journal.
- k) **Thanks:** Chair Meagher thanked Ms. Burke for her idea and cataloging the linens.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Donations:**

- a) **Juan Riera:** 1 Glass candlestick holder (leaf pattern for two candles), 2 Glass candlestick holders, 1 Glass butter dish with silver-tinted metal cover, 6 Glass coasters with silver-tinted metal rims. (Other items donated by him were: 1 Box Keepsakes holiday ornaments (approx. 30), Mexican vase and tray, Paper book plates; 8 ½ x 5-inches (approx. 60), National Geographic World Atlas (1981), Assorted books (novels and reference), Assorted bric-a-brac). Mr. Riera noted that the items were early 20th century and came from an old Florida family (not named). Chair Meagher said the double glass candlestick holder was like the ones in the house, the butter dish seemed newer, and the coasters might be of the same era. She suggested selling the items on their merchandise table. The board agreed.

A motion was made by Ms. Burke and seconded by Ms. Seipp to send Mr. Riera a letter of thanks and ask him if it was okay to sell them at the merchandise table.

The motion was unanimously approved.

- b) **Pat Blanco:** A picture frame (mirror) with picture imprinted on sterling silver; straight razor, curling iron, shoe hook, button hook; travelling ink well, glasses. Ms. Blanco had worked for many years with the World Health Organization and gathered items on her trips. She had donated items from the 18th century. All items were developed by the Egyptians. Ms. Cason said she had seen many of the same type of items exhibited in the museum in Egypt Chair Meagher asked Ms. Cason to email the information to the board to read at their leisure.
- c) **Guidelines for Donations:** Ms. Kautz reminded the board that their task for accepting donations for items to be displayed in the house was to ensure that the items were Merrick family-owned or were either period or Coral Gables appropriate. The house was decorated to reflect the heyday of the Merrick's which was the early 1920s and items should be relevant to that time. Ms. Cason said that all the items were around that time except for the bottle (1965) which could be used in the kitchen to put flowers. Chair Meagher said that much of the furniture in the house had been accumulated by the family over the years and was Victorian, before the 1920s, and some of the items being donated were like items they already had. She thought the items could have belonged to the family and would fit in with the collection. Ms. Seipp said many items were not easy to come by at that time and so were kept for years. Ms. Ehrenhaft said she would not accept the picture. Ms. Reese thought they should revisit the guidelines. Chair Meagher suggested that Ms. Kautz email the guidelines and the board could vote on any suggested changes at the next board meeting and decide what items to accept. Ms. Kautz said the guidelines were developed to give the board the ability to decline items and a way to keep the collection specific to the house and the displays appropriate.

- 2. **Events at the Merrick House:** Chair Meagher suggested a monthly lecture series, inviting people who had lived and grown up in Coral Gables and have them bring their memorabilia and tell their stories which would be recorded. Tickets could be sold through EventBrite for a limited number of people. Ms. Burke said the oral histories were being lost and she suggested recording them. Ms. Worm had seen a book of something similar in the house. Ms. Burke suggested naming it 100 Voices for the 100th Anniversary of the City. Stories could be small vignettes. The suggestion was made to start with Dorothy Thompson. Ms. Kautz said there had been a

lecture series at the House years ago. Ms. Seipp was worried that if it was too small and informal people would not attend. The suggestion was made to set up the first six dates ahead of time and request RSVPs. After discussion it was suggested to plan for the fall. Ms. Burke suggested working out the logistics and writing a definite proposal. Mr. Adams thought it was a good idea but was concerned if it was RSVP and no fee then there was nothing to stop people from booking for the different dates and not showing up which would affect their limited numbers. He said the event and the speakers needed to be coordinated with time allowed for question and answers and they could be recorded. Ms. Seipp suggested having a couple of different speakers. The board suggested show and tell. Chair Meagher asked if they could form a committee to meet separate from the board meetings. Ms. Kautz said they could appoint a committee to gather information, but they could not make decisions. Ms. Seipp agreed to be the Chair and organize the committee.

3. **Private Tours:** Requests were being received for private tours and Chair Meagher suggested they be a different price. When asked about the fees Ms. Kautz said the fees were included the City's Fee Ordinance and any revisions need Commission approval. Mr. Adams reminded the board that Ms. Worm had done a comparison of fees charged at other places within the past year and that should be the starting point. Chair Meagher asked if there was a timeline as to when the Fee Ordinance was reviewed, Ms. Kautz said no, and she would ask the City Attorney. She went on to say that group tours had never been limited in numbers as they wanted to encourage students and classes. Usually, half the class was inside while the other half was outside either having lunch or learning about something else and then they would switch. Ms. Burke said they have had groups of 40 kids and 3 docents, so they had split up the groups and rotated. Ms. Seipp suggested charging a per person charge and a \$25 fee, so they don't discourage visitors. Chair Meagher said that a Square or Venmo account was necessary as many people do not carry cash. Mr. Adams suggested having a set fee for a private tour and a maximum amount of people per tour. Ms. Kautz said the ordinance did not specify charges for private tours.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:11 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams
Historic Preservation Officer